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THE LOTUS

Originals of Some Characters in Thackeray.



WILLIAM S. Walsh who as editor of "Lippincott's," a considerable number of years ago, accepted and printed Amélie Rives' novel, "The Quick or the Dead," which somewhat qualified the high literary reputation that author had gained with her earlier stories, and who, more lately, edited the two pages of literature in the "N. Y. Herald's" literary and art section, contributes to the "Columbian" magazine an article on the originals of some characters in Thackeray. Mr. Walsh is a writer of scholarly, serious and, withal, unpedantic attainments, who would be far better known than he is had not a great volume of his work been contributed anonymously to newspapers. His Thackeray article is gossipy and informing, and will be of interest to LOTUS readers.



"PENDENNIS" he considers the most autobiographic of Thackeray's novels. Lady



Ritchie, the novelist's daughter, is quoted as writing that she had always thought there was something of her father in Warrington. But the author himself, in a letter to his friend George Moreland Crawford, who was Paris correspondent of the "London Daily News," and which accompanied a presentation copy of the novel, wrote: "There is something of you in Warrington," a remark that bears out the observation that Thackeray rarely drew an out-and-out portrait, though sometimes venturing upon a recognizable caricature of persons he detested. If Warrington, as Mr. Walsh argues, represents the serious side of his creator's character, Pendennis himself represents the more frivolous side.

One of the amusing circumstances connected with the reception of "Pendennis" was the wrath of all Ireland that was brought upon Thackeray by an allusion to Catherine Hayes, a criminal of the previous century. Moralizing on the common habit of mankind to love and admire wickedness, Thackeray instanced Bluebeard, Catherine Hayes and George Barnwell as famous criminals who had achieved great personal popularity. Now at this very time

THE LOTUS Catherine Hayes, the Irish singer, was filling an engagement at Covent Garden Theatre, and the Irish press, already simmering with indignation over the Costigan-Fotheringay episode, burst out into scorching wrath. "The Freeman's Journal" called Thackeray "the hugest humbug that was ever thrust on the public," and declared that in attempting to ruin Miss Hayes he had damned himself to everlasting infamy. It took a long time before the Irish press and people accepted his explanation that he was referring to the celebrated Mrs. Hayes, who was hanged at Tyburn. The latter lady, by the way, was the heroine of "Catharine," that early novel by Thackeray, in which he satirized the extravagances of the Newgate school of fiction as represented by Bulwer in "Eugene Aram" and Charles Dickens in "Oliver Twist."



LADY RICHIE declares that the original of the inimitable Becky was a most charming, dazzling little person, who, having driven to Young Street to see Thackeray, greeted him with great affection and brilliancy, and on her departure presented him with a bunch of vio-

lets. At the time of the appearance of "Jane Eyre," a report was started that Charlotte Brontë was the original Becky, and that she had revenged herself by caricaturing her caricaturist as Rochester. The fact that Thackeray had an insane wife lent a brutal suggestion of truth to the story. Thackeray himself always parried with a laugh all questions concerning his prototype. But a woman who knew him intimately was not so reticent. She told Lewis Melville, Thackeray's biographer, that, although the character of Becky was an invention, it had been suggested to the author by a governess who lived in the neighborhood of Kensington Square, and was the companion of a very rich and very selfish old woman.



"Vanity Fair," strange to say, foretold the fate of this governess. Like Becky, but some years after Becky's history had been published in "Vanity Fair," she ran away with the nephew of her employer, and for a while made a sensation in society circles quite in the manner of Mrs. Rawdon Crawley and by exactly the same methods. "This living handsomely on nothing a year resulted in the usual way; and in the end the ex-governess fled the country, and was to

THE be seen on the Continent flitting from gambling
LOTUS place to gambling place."



THACKERAY is said to have recognized the indebtedness of Col. Newcome to Cooper's Natty Bumppo. At an American dinner table, where the conversation had turned to Cooper's novels, he is reported as saying that Leatherstocking was the greatest character created in fiction since Don Quixote, and as referring to his death scene in "The Prairie" as surpassing anything he knew of in English literature. The colonel's "Adsum!" at the call of death is paralleled by Bumppo's "Here!"

According to another story, Thackeray, when in New York, asked the Rev. Dr. Henry W. Bellows, a well known Unitarian clergyman, what he thought of "The Newcomes."

"I have only one fault to find with it," responded Dr. Bellows, "you are trying to impose a plagiarism upon us."

A puzzled look passed over Thackeray's face, and the doctor went on to explain:

"You have constructed your Col. Newcome out of two characters already familiar to all

students of good literature, Don Quixote and Sir Roger de Coverly."

Thackeray started. "You have touched on the very truth," said he. "I had been reading the Don's memoirs and the Sir Roger papers in the "Spectator" just before attacking that task."

The suggestion of course is that Thackeray drew over-lavishly upon two famous characters in literature for his profoundly beautiful portrait of the leading character in "The Newcomes"—which shows how far afield some people will go in an effort to charge plagiarism upon an original and creative mind. Dr. Bellows was a prominent Unitarian clergyman in New York and there is little doubt that he and Thackeray met—equally is there little doubt that neither said to the other what is reported in the above anecdote, vaguely attributed to a Washington newspaper.

